

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
February 27, 2007**

Members Present: Morris, Ennis, Carroll, Harden, Kitson, Magner, Spitzfaden, and Webb

Members Excused: Endres, Lank, Lardizzzone, Newstadt, Timberman, Thompson and Wasson

Staff Present: Davila and Reid

Guests: Richard Citron (VA Medical Center Director), Bill McMullen (AF Sergeants Association), Tom Daws (VVA), Rich Robichand (DELVETS), Al Carter (SOS), Ron Sarg (MOAA), and Carl Witte (MOWW)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Chairman Morris opened the meeting by reporting that he went through the policies and procedures manuals for the Veterans Home and he felt that each of the Commissioners should take the time to look through them as well.

Mr. Citron gave the Commission an update on the Wilmington VA Medical Center. He reported that Congress passed a budget for the VA Health Care system that would allow the Wilmington VA Medical Center to not only continue with current programs, but to allow for expansion of services, improve staffing, purchase equipment, and perform construction that would improve operations. He reported that in reference to the Dover community-based clinic, they put out feelers in the local community, but received no viable responses. So a commercial realtor has been contracted to find some possible locations to set up the clinic. They are hoping to have the clinic open by the summer of 2007. The contract with Nanticoke for the Milford and Seaford clinics expires this year and they are negotiating for new contracts, as well as looking at new options; perhaps having the clinics staffed by the VA. The VA is continuing to conduct outreach for returning Iraqi and Afghanistan troops and is working beside the military with assessments. Wilmington VA is one of 17 facilities nationwide that is participating in a new initiative to try and stop hospital acquired infections. Mr. Citron continued to explain about the program and types of infections, discussion followed. Other issues discussed were employees parking in handicapped parking, as well as issues related to the expansion of Behavioral Health Care were also discussed.

Mr. McMullen reported that the Air Force Sergeants Association will be having their conference in Dover on the last weekend in April 2007.

Mr. Daws reported that Chapter 83 of the VVA in New Castle Co. is starting a new program in alliance with Gold Star families. They are getting involved to make sure that everyone who has a loss in Delaware receives their Gold Star banner/flag and pins from DOD casualty officers. Discussion followed.

Dr. Robichand reported they are wrapping up their plans for Memorial Day at DELVETS Post #1. They will be honoring all those who have served in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Sarg wanted to thank everyone who supported the MOAA fundraiser. He reported that March 31, 2007, will be Retiree Appreciation Day at Dover AFB and MOAA will have a speaker.

Mr. Witte reported that their organization's primary focus is on supporting youth leadership programs. They are sponsoring several Delaware youth this year to attend the Youth Leadership Foundation in Valley Forge.

MOTION BY HARDEN TO ACCEPT JANUARY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES, SECONDED BY SPITZFADEN, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

The Cemetery report for the month of January 2007 was provided.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Chairman Morris reported that the American Legion has their speaker lined up for Memorial Day. Mr. Davila reported that Dr. Sarg is working on preparations for Flag Day at the Southern Cemetery.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Chairman Morris encouraged everyone to go on the website and view the legislation that is being processed. He would like to send letters to the Chairpersons of the two legislative committees for Veterans Affairs to request a meeting and discuss issues that affect veterans.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Commissioner Carroll reported that as of February 27, 2007, the Veterans Home Fund is at \$56,477.77 and the Friends of Delaware Veterans Home is \$478,035. He announced that he attended Senator Carper's annual Veterans Summit on February 22, 2007, and provided a briefing on issues from that meeting. Walter Koopman is seeking participation from all the service organizations for an event that will be held at the Cheer Center on Long Neck Rd, March 19, 2007, 8:00 am. He can be reached at (302) 945-7122.

Mr. Reid thanked Commissioner Carroll for inviting him to Senator Carper's annual Veterans Summit. He reported that the hiring process for positions at the Veterans Home are in various stages and that there are currently 56 completed applications for admittance into the Veterans Home. The daily rate has been posted at \$210 for skilled and intermediate care and \$130 for the domiciliary and these fees should be offset by the VA's per diem. Mr. Reid reported on the expected timeline of events to occur at the Veterans Home and there was discussion about how the timeline would play out and how the care would be broken down. There was discussion concerning the application response to job postings for the Veterans Home.

Chairman Morris inquired as to whether the policies and procedures had been put on CD and it was confirmed by Mr. Reid that they had. Chairman Morris stated when he reviewed the policies and procedures manuals, he composed a list of concerns that was provided to the Commissioners for discussion.

Commissioner Webb questioned what efforts were being made by the Veterans Home to include veterans, who are already in a nursing care facility in Delaware, in the application process. Discussion followed. Also, there was discussion concerning the monies from the Friends of the Veterans Home fund and board members. There was further discussion about donated and loaned items provided to the Veterans Home. It was reported that all future Steering Committee meetings will be held at the Veterans Home. Commissioner Ennis questioned the set-up of some By-Laws.

PERSONNEL

Chairman Morris announced that the Pharmacy Committee will meet on March 5, 2007, and Commissioner Thompson will attend.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

No report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

No report, but Commissioner Endres is still looking for a Commissioner to take over the chairmanship.

BY-LAWS

Commissioner Ennis reported that changes to the By-Laws have been drafted. The Committee met with Mr. Davila and some minor changes were discussed. He stated that any changes to the By-Laws were made in bold print for the

Commissioners to review. If any Commissioner would like to recommend changes, let the Committee know as soon as possible. Discussion followed concerning the By-Laws.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Spitzfaden (MOAA) – He wanted to have it on record that, in general, the MOAA is not pleased with not getting some definite timeframes for what is going on with the Veterans Home and feels that some of this should have been taken care of by now. MOAA sees the possibility of running out of time and it could be very embarrassing if certain issues are not addressed.

Magner (AMVETS) – The National Convention will be held August 3-11, 2007, in Greensboro, NC.

Carroll (MOPH) – The National Convention will be held August 7-11, 2007, in Ellendale, NY. The Department of Delaware is in the process of developing legislation to establish highway systems throughout the United States to be designated as Purple Heart Memorial highways or Trails. He discussed the details of the proposed legislation.

Kitson (VFW) – Reported that they will be in conference in Washington, DC, March 3-7, 2007. The Department of Delaware will be presenting a check for just over \$45,000 to their Commander-in-Chief for Operation Uplink. VFW Post 615 donated \$1,000 to the Veterans Home.

Harden (WAVES) – The Salute to Hospitalized Veterans did not go very well because of the snow that caused them to cancel a number of events. WAVES Nat'l will be having a meeting on March 17, 2007. They are still offering two \$1,500 scholarships for the descendants or relatives of females who have or are currently serving in the Navy. The scholarship titles will be "Women in the Seabees" and "Women, Guardians of the Coast". They have sent out applications and are waiting for them to come back.

Morris (American Legion) – The National Commander will be in Delaware on March 8, 2007. The American Legion is working with the Secretary of Homeland Security to enter into partnership programs.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Ennis distributed the last of the tributes to the Commissioners for the work they did in getting the Veterans Home in Milford.

ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Chairman Morris commented that there will be an event at the Veterans Home when the first resident is admitted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: **MARCH 27, 2007 (11:00 AM)**

LOCATION: **Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED